

News Release



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Photos available

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CALIFORNIA CITRUS STATE HISTORIC PARK IS CONTINUING TO EXPAND

RIVERSIDE - Not many years ago, Citrus was King in California.

In the 1930s, huge plaster orange roadside stands sold fresh-squeezed juice along California's Highway 99, signifying the importance of citrus in the California economy. Citrus was brought to California in the 1700s by Spanish missionary fathers who planted Mediterranean-type sweet orange trees around the missions. In the early 1900s, an effort to promote citrus ranching in the state brought would-be citrus ranch barons flocking to California to cash in on the citrus industry and the "California Dream". The second "gold rush" began.

That era is being recaptured at California Citrus State Historic Park, located in the Arlington Heights/Lake Matthews area of Riverside. This unique historic park tells the far-reaching story of the citrus industry and its role in the history of California.

The concept of a Citrus Park was created in 1982 when the State Park and Recreation Commission recommended funding. In 1987, cooperative planning for the park took place, involving the State, the City of Riverside and a team of consultants. Phase I of five planned construction phases was completed in 1993 and the park was open to the public. Phase II is nearing completion with a "Grand Opening" of the Visitors Center planned for early 2003.

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The Riverside location was chosen because its views of citrus groves in a historically significant location provides the ideal environment in which to interpret the nature and significance of California's citrus industry. Due to the rapid industrialization of Southern California, relatively few areas remain in citrus production. This area chosen for the park still continues to produce high-quality fruits.

The park is approximately one and one-half miles southeast of the 91 Freeway at Van Buren and Dufferin Avenues, encompassing Mockingbird Canyon reservoir, a portion of the historic Gage Canal, and some 180 acres of working citrus groves. The park contains approximately 377 acres.

Palm-lined streets in and around the park are a significant part of the cultural and esthetic resources of the site. A series of hillocks, or knolls, in the park are encircled by some of these palm-lined roadways from the 1920s, which had been planned to lead to home sites on top of the knolls. The homes of wealthy growers were never built on these knolls, but the roadways remain.

The park entrance, the first glimpse visitors and the local community will have of the park, will be made of the standard clapboard variety of fruit stand from the 1900-1935 period, and will house exhibits about the park and the history of the citrus industry.

The park's new Visitor Center will introduce visitors to the park and its "California Dream" message, showing the realities and fantasies of the citrus industry and how they affected the state.

A large historic residence will be constructed as an example of the estate of a wealthy grower. The home is planned to include a restaurant or "bed and breakfast" and will be located on top of one of the knolls in the park, overlooking the surrounding historic citrus landscape.

Approximately 10 acres of the park has been set aside for a middle-class grower's ranch where visitors will have the opportunity to get hands-on experience in demonstration groves. This ranch will reflect the fact that not all growers lived the life of the wealthy.

Future plans include a packing house that will demonstrate how citrus farmers prepared crops for market and will highlight the cooperative marketing aspects of the industry. The packing house will include a working packing line, using citrus grown within the park itself.

Also, a worker's camp and company store will be constructed, faithful to details of life in the turn-of-the-century groves.

The park will show how the Gage Canal, built during the late 19th century, and its related structures managed water in California and how several thousand acres of citrus, including the 150 acres of existing groves in the park, are irrigated.

Nature trails and hiking facilities will wind throughout the park, linking an amphitheater, picnic areas for families and groups, and Mockingbird Reservoir.

As at historic Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia, it is envisioned that there will be living history programs at California Citrus State Historic Park conducted by volunteers. In fact, it is hoped that the park will be a sort of "Williamsburg West" in presenting the most accurate living history presentation possible.

Also planned for the park are a number of other features, such as a citrus nursery, varietal collection, insectary, gardens, and an arboretum.

The Phase II project will essentially double the facilities available at the park. It consists of a ¼ mile main entry drive lined with palm trees winding up through the existing navel and Valencia orange groves to the base of the highest knoll by Van Buren Boulevard. A new 100-space parking lot will be adjacent to the new 5,000 square-foot Visitor Center. The Visitor Center will resemble a packinghouse from the 1920s and will feature 3,500 square feet of

exhibit space. It will also contain a gift shop and public restrooms. Also, adjacent to the parking lot will be a focal garden with fountain and decorative iron gates and fencing leading to the future “Wealthy Growers Mansion.” The fountain will depict the first “Sunkist” advertisement of the California girl giving the Iowa boy an orange in the “cold” of winter. It features four-foot bronze statutes replicating the boy and girl with a reproduction of the advertisement and interpretive plaque. Surrounding the fountain are newly planted roses. Decorative iron work complete with citrus images adorn the fence leading to the future “Wealthy Growers Mansion.” In the new parking lot you will find walkways lined with “smudge pots” retrofitted with light bulbs that will emit a glowing orange light for safety and viewing pleasure at night.

Another important element to Phase II is the water flume bridge. The flume bridge will resemble a replica of how water was carried across canyons in the early 1900s. However, this one will not carry water, but will allow visitors to walk from the south side of the Park, across the arroyo (canyon) to groves on the north side and to the future “historic core” area of the park.

For more information, contact California Citrus State Historic Park at (909) 780-6222.